

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-08 ACDA-12 OES-07
DOE-15 SOE-02 /131 W
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R 170915Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7880
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 3625

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IR, SA
SUBJ: SAUDI DEFENSE MINISTER'S VISIT TO TEHRAN

1. SAUDI DEFENSE MINISTER SULTAN VISITED TEHRAN APRIL 10-12
FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH IRANIAN OFFICIALS. HE WAS FORMALLY THE
GUEST OF IRANIAN DEFENSE MINISTER AZIMI, WHO REPORTEDLY REPRESENTED
IRAN IN BILATERAL MEETINGS. DURING HIS VISIT HE ALSO MET WITH THE
SHAH AND PRIME AMOUZEGAR. SAUDI AMBASSADOR BAKR, WHO WAS PRESENT
DURING THESE MEETINGS, FILLED US IN ON THE VISIT.

2. BAKR SAID THAT THE SITUATION ON THE HORN OF AFRICA DOMINATED
MUCH OF THE CONVERSATION WITH THE SHAH AND THE PRIME MINISTER.
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CONSIDERABLE UNHAPPINESS WAS EXPRESSED ABOUT PAST U.S. ATTITUDES
AND LACK OF SUPPORT FOR SIAD BARRE. BOTH SIDES AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT

THERE WAS NOT MUCH POINT IN CRYING OVER SPILT MILK AND THOUGHT HAD
TO BE GIVEN AS TO WHAT COULD BE DONE NOW TO PREVENT SOMALIA
FROM FALLING BACK INTO THE SOVIET ORBIT OR RADICAL HANDS.
THE BEST THAT ANYBODY COULD COME UP WITH WAS THAT SAUDI ARABIA,

HOEFULLY IRAN AND OTHER LIKE-MINDED AREA NEIGHBORS, COULD FOCUS ON PROVIDING SOMALIA WITH SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WHICH WOULD TAKE THE SOMALI PEOPLE'S MIND OFF THE RECENT DISASTER IN THE OGADEN. THIS IS TO BE DISCUSSED IN MORE CONCRETE TERMS AT THE FORTHCOMING ISLAMIC MINISTERS' CONFERENCE. THE SHAH TOLD SULTAN THAT FOREIGN MINISTER KHALATBARY WOULD ATTEND, BUT KHALATBARY SUBSEQUENTLY REMINDED BAKR THAT HE MUST BE IN IRAN FOR THE FORTHCOMING VISIT OF GERMAN PRESIDENT SCHEEL; THEREFORE MFA UNDER SECRETARY NADIM WILL REPRESENT IRAN. THE DISCUSSIONS ALSO TOUCHED ON ERITREA, BUT ASIDE FROM AGREEING THAT THE SITUATION WAS CONFUSED AND COMPLICATED, NEITHER THOUGHT THAT MUCH COULD BE DONE ABOUT IT OTHER THAN TO URGE THE ERITREANS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE EPMG. BAKR SAID THAT SAUDI ARABIA WAS STILL PROVIDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE ERITREANS.

3. WITH RESPECT TO BILATERAL MATTERS, BAKR SAID THE SHAH SPENT CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF TIME TRYING TO PERSUADE PRINCE SULTAN THAT SAUDI ARABIA COULD USE ABOUT 100 AMST AIRCRAFT. A SAUDI ORDER OF THIS MAGNITUDE, JOINED WITH AN IRANIAN ORDER OF A SIMILAR AMOUNT, WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR PRODUCTION LINE TO BEGIN TO ROLL. BAKR CLAIMS THAT PRINCE SULTAN FENDED THE SHAH OFF BY SAYING THAT HE WAS REALLY NOT AN EXPERT IN THIS FIELD AND THAT HE WOULD HAVE HIS ADVISORS STUDY THE MATTER WHEN HE RETURNED HOME. BAKR SAID THAT SULTAN CONFIDED TO HIM PRIVATELY THAT THE PLANE WAS TOO EXPENSIVE AND HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD DO WITH SUCH A LARGE NUMBER.
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4. REGIONAL SECURITY WAS ALSO DISCUSSED AND PRIME MINISTER AMOUZEGAR RAISED BUT DID NOT DWELL ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A PACT BEING SIGNED. SULTAN OPINED THAT THIS WAS A BIT PREMATURE AND THAT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT HAD TO BE APPROACHED IN SMALL STEPS. IN THIS RESPECT IT WAS AGREED THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD SEND A DELEGATION OF SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS TO IRAN IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO MEET WITH THEIR COUNTERPARTS TO EXPLORE POSSIBLE MEASURES OF COOPERATION IN THE MILITARY FIELD, INCLUDING TRAINING. SULTAN WENT ON TO ADD THAT SAUDI ARABIA DID NOT HAVE A BIG PROBLEM WITH THE IDEA OF A PACT BUT FELT THAT OTHER PERSIAN GULF NEIGHBORS SHOULD BE INCLUDED. FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, THE POSSIBILITY OF OTHERS AGREEING SEEMED REMOTE BECAUSE THEY FEARED IRAQ, WHO, EVERYONE KNEW, OPPOSED THE IDEA.

5. DURING THE COURSE OF A MEETING ON OTHER MATTERS THE AMBASSADOR ASKED THE SHAH ABOUT SULTAN'S VISIT. THE SHAH DISMISSED IT AS ONE OF LITTLE OTHER THAN SYMBOLIC CONSEQUENCE. AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT HE TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE AND SULTAN DID DISCUSS THE MUTUAL SAUDI-IRANIAN NEED FOR GREATER AIRLIFT CAPACITY IN VIEW OF THE VAST TERRITORIAL EXPANSES IN THEIR TWO COUNTRIES.

6. FOLLOWING THE VISIT THERE HAS BEEN SOME SPECULATION IN THE LOCAL PRESS THAT THE VULNERABILITY OF THE OIL SHIPPING LINE THROUGH THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ AND IRAN'S AND SAUDI OIL INSTALLATIONS WERE ALSO DISCUSSED. IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTION, BAKR SAID THAT THE SUBJECT HAD NOT EVEN BEEN MENTIONED.

7. COMMENT: OVER ALL SULTAN WAS GIVEN A FRIENDLY RECEPTION AND BOTH SIDES SEEMED TO AGREE ON THEIR ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL AFFAIRS. SOME PROGRESS MAY HAVE ALSO BEEN MADE WITH RESPECT OF HOW BOTH SIDES MIGHT COOPERATE IN ADDRESSING THEM. THERE WAS TALK OF A FOLLOW-UP VISIT BY PRINCE FAHD, PERHAPS AT THE INVITATION OF THE CROWN PRINCE OR THE PRIME MINISTER, BUT NOTHING DEFINITE WAS FIXED.
SULLIVAN
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